

# Prayer around the Advent Wreath

## Suggestions for use

This resource can be used for personal and family prayer online. Printed out, and either laminated or framed, it can be used for prayer during private visits to the church.

One of the Advent Stations could be used each week during Advent and the two Christmas stations could be used towards the end of the Christmas season. See also the “Prayer at the Crib” resource, as this could be used for prayer and reflection earlier in the Christmas season.

The stations could also form the basis for online liturgies with the additions of some of the music suggestions given for each station.

If we can have congregations present in our churches during the Advent season the resource could be used as the basis for short prayer services.



### **History and Meaning of the Advent Wreath**

The lights of the candles on the Advent Wreath break through the darkness, reminding us of the Light of Christ that we anticipate during this holy season of Advent. Like many of our Church traditions, the use of the Advent Wreath with its evergreens and its lighted candles finds its origins in pagan tradition and ritual. “Pre-Germanic peoples used wreaths with lit candles during the dark and cold of winter as signs of hope in the future warmth and lengthening sunlit days of spring. Similarly, Scandinavians lit candles which were placed around a wheel, and prayers were offered to the god of light to turn the wheel of the earth back toward the sun to lengthen the days and restore warmth.”

In the middle ages, Germanic peoples began incorporating a lighted wreath into the Christian season of Advent. It didn’t gain widespread popularity until the 1800s.

The Advent Wreath is symbolic. The evergreens used for the wreath itself are reminders of life. Shaping them into a circle reinforces that meaning. The circle is also a sign of everlasting life as well as the eternity of God.

The four candles used, three purple and one rose, mark the Sundays of Advent before Christmas. The purple candles are reminders that this should be a time of prayer and sacrifice to prepare us for the second coming of Christ. On the third Sunday, the rose candle is lit to announce Gaudete Sunday, (Gaudete means rejoice) a Sunday of rejoicing for Christ’s coming is near. With the lighting of that third candle, brightness is growing and the darkness is being overcome.

A fifth and larger white candle in the centre represents Christ. It is lit on Christmas Eve as a declaration that Christ has come into the world and the darkness is vanquished utterly.

The Advent Wreath serves as a powerful visual reminder of the holiness of the season. The light of the candles invites us to quiet ourselves during this busy time and reflect on the true meaning of Christmas. It provides an invitation to wait and pray in hopeful anticipation for the coming of Christ. We are called to welcome the light of Christ into our lives.

### **Blessing of the Advent Wreath (First Sunday)**

Isaiah 9:1-2

The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light;  
on those who live in the land of deep shadow a light has shone.  
You have made their gladness greater,  
you have made their joy increase;  
they rejoice in your presence  
as men rejoice at harvest time,  
as men are happy when they are dividing the spoils.

Let us pray:

Lord our God,  
we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ:  
he is Emmanuel, God with us, the hope of the peoples,  
he is the wisdom that teaches and guides us,  
he is the Saviour of every nation.  
Lord God, let your blessing come upon us  
as we light the candles of this wreath.  
May the wreath and its light  
be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation.  
May he come quickly and not delay.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
R/. Amen.

The first candle is lit.

[\\_ Music suggestions:](#)

- [Christ be our Light \(In Caelo\)](#)
  - [O'Come, o' come Emmanuel Veritas Hymnal and 100 Carols for Choirs\)](#)
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## **1st Sunday of Advent**

### Scripture

Isaiah 63:16-17, 64:1

You, Lord, yourself are our Father,  
Our redeemer is your ancient name.  
Why, Lord, leave us to stray from your ways  
and harden our hearts against fearing you?  
Return for the sake of your servants,  
Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come down.

### **Reflection**

In the story of the fall of Adam and Eve, which we read of in the Book of Genesis, the sacred writer, inspired by God, is telling us that human beings, who had been created in the image and likeness of God, had in some act of rebellion turned away from God. However, though God could have taken the view that he wanted nothing more to do with us, and could have left us to damnation, he did not, and instead set about drawing us back to himself. Isaiah pleads with God to come down to save his people. At the beginning of Advent (Advent is a word which means coming) we join with Isaiah imploring God to come into our world to save us.

### Music suggestions:

- [Come O Long Expected Jesus \(Feasts and Seasons\)](#)
  - [O Comfort My People \(Veritas Hymnal\)](#)
  - [O' Come, o' come Emmanuel \(Veritas Hymnal and 100 Carols for Choir\)](#)
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## **2nd Sunday of Advent**

### **Scripture**

Isaiah 40: 3-4

A voice cries, Prepare in the wilderness a way for the Lord.  
Make a straight highway for our God across the desert.  
Let every valley be filled in,  
every mountain and hill be laid low.

### **Reflection**

The voice crying in the wilderness foretold my Isaiah is that of John the Baptist. When Mary went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, the child in her womb leapt for joy because he recognized that the salvation of mankind was imminent. Even before his birth, John was giving witness to Jesus. When he came, his role was to point to Jesus and to proclaim a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. We are called during this season of preparation to fill in valleys and level the hills and mountains of our lives; in other words, to rid ourselves of whatever prevents our wholehearted acceptance of Jesus when he comes. We are reminded to repent and avail ourselves of the sacrament of penance.

### **Music suggestions:**

- [Prepare the Way of the Lord \(Taize\)](#)
  - [Behold a Virgin Bearing Him \(Veritas Hymnal\)](#)
  - [Behold a Virgin Bearing Him \(Feast and Seasons\) different setting](#)
  - [Wait for the Lord \(In Caelo\)](#)
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### **3rd Sunday of Advent**

#### **Scripture**

Isaiah 61: 1-2

The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me,  
for the Lord has anointed me.  
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor,  
to bind up hearts that are broken;  
to proclaim liberty to captives,  
freedom, to those in prison;  
to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.

#### **Reflection**

What joyous news this Gaudete Sunday! What good news is announced! The Lord has good things in store for us. He comes to remedy every human suffering, pain and sorrow; the lot of every human being in some measure at some time in life. He comes bearing salvation. This signifies the greatness of our God; the love and mercy of our God. In the face of such majesty and divine condescension (God's stooping down to us in love and making himself known to us) we respond as John the Baptist did with humility: I am not fit to undo his sandal-straps. Humility and gratitude are the appropriate responses to God's coming among us in the Person of Jesus

#### **Music Suggestions:**

- [God's Spirit is in my Heart \(Hymns Old and New Liturgical\)](#)
  - [How Love on the Mountains Our God Reigns \(Hymns Old and New Liturgical\)](#)
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## **4th Sunday of Advent**

### **Scripture**

Samuel 7: 5, 11-14, 16

Go and tell my servant David, “Thus the Lord speaks: The Lord will make you great; the Lord will make you a House. And when your days are ended and you are laid to rest with your ancestors, I will preserve the offspring of your body after you and make his sovereignty secure. I will be a father to him and he a son to me. Your House and your sovereignty will always stand secure before me and your throne be established forever.”

### **Reflection**

Jesus is of the line of David. He is the Lord’s son and his sovereignty is established for all eternity. He is the King of kings. He is the all-powerful ever- living God. We are secure in his security. On us is bestowed a royal dignity because we share his humanity, the humanity he deigned to take onto himself as true God and true man when he was conceived in Mary’s womb when she said: I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me. We are restored to the dignity intended by God at the beginning. Jesus has wrought our salvation by becoming one of us.

### **Music Suggestions:**

- [Once in Royal David’s City \(Veritas Hymnal & 100 Carols for Choirs\)](#)
  - [All Glory Praise and Honour omit verse 2 \(Veritas Hymnal\)](#)
  - [To Jesus Christ our Sov’ reign King \(Veritas Hymnal\)](#)
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